

1-10 (canceled)

11. (New) A domestic appliance, comprising:

an appliance body including a utility space formed therein;

an illumination device for illuminating said utility space;

a door for closing off said utility space;

a contact element;

an electric control circuit for automatically switching on said illumination device as a function of human touch on said contact element;

said contact element formed as a capacitor body whose capacitance is altered by human touch;

said contact element having at least a portion formed of an electrically conductive material;

an electrically conductive path formed from said electrically conductive material of said contact element to said control circuit;

said control circuit sensing said capacitance of said contact element capacitor; and

said control circuit automatically switching on said illumination device as a function of said sensed capacitance of said contact element.

12. (New) The domestic appliance according to claim 11, including a door handle formed on said door, said door handle forming said contact element.

13. (New) The domestic appliance according to claim 11, including a switch actuated by said door and electrically connected to said control circuit, said switch having

different switch states depending upon whether said door is open or closed and said control circuit controls said illumination device as a function of said switch state and therefore as a function of whether said door is open or closed.

14. (New) The domestic appliance according to claim 11, including said control circuit is arranged at or in said appliance body and said electrically conductive path includes an interruption contact arrangement which closes said path when said door is closed and opens said path when said door is open, said interruption contact arrangement includes a contact part contacting said door and a contact arranged at said appliance body and said control circuit operates as a function of said interruption contact arrangement and therefore as a function of whether said door is open or closed.

15. (New) The domestic appliance according to claim 11, including said control circuit including a dimmer circuit for switching on said illumination device automatically through an illumination state which slowly becomes more illuminated from a dimmed state to a fully switched on illumination state.

16. (New) The domestic appliance according to claim 11, including said control circuit including a dimmer circuit for switching off said illumination device automatically from a fully switched on illumination state through a progressively dimmer illumination state to a fully switched off illumination state.

17. (New) The domestic appliance according to claim 12, including a portion of said electrically conductive path including a securing element for securing said door handle to said door.

18. (New) The domestic appliance according to claim 12, including said door handle having at least a portion of said electrically conductive material formed on a surface thereof where it can be contacted by said human touch upon actuation of said door.

19. (New) The domestic appliance according to claim 18, including said portion of said electrically conductive material is covered by an electrically insulating material where it can be contacted by said human touch upon actuation of said door.

20. (New) The domestic appliance according to claim 11, including an appliance operation circuit coupled to said control circuit and said control circuit automatically switching on said illumination device as a function of the switching state of said appliance operation circuit.